

## Rep. Matsui Votes to Make America's Railways Safer Legislation Provides For New Inspections, Regulations

Rep. Matsui Votes to Make America's Railways Safer Legislation Provides For New Inspections, Regulations

October 18, 2007

[Printable Version \(PDF\)](#)

Washington, D.C. — Last night, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to make America's railways safer by passing the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2095). The legislation will strengthen rail safety, provides for new technology, and establishes new safety regulations.

The bill reauthorizes and renames Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and takes a variety of steps to strengthen rail safety including updating the limits on rail workers' hours of service to reduce fatigue-related accidents, nearly doubling the number of safety inspectors, requiring new safety technologies on trains, and upgrading safety at rail tracks and crossings.

"It is incumbent on the Congress to make our communities safer, and this legislation is a significant step in achieving that goal for our railways. In Sacramento, we have railroad tracks in our neighborhoods and people rely on rail for transportation. I am committed to making sure that the residents of the Sacramento region can be confident that they are safe aboard our rail systems," said Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05).

This legislation will take measures to reduce the amount of train accidents and fatigue-related incidents. From 1994 to 2005, the number of collisions and derailments increased by 33 percent. Forty percent of all train accidents are the result of human factors, and one in four of these accidents result from fatigue. Yet, it has been almost forty years since the hours-of-service laws have been significantly revised.

The Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act addresses these issues:

- o To reduce fatigue-related rail accidents, the bill overhauls outdated hours-of-service laws for rail workers. The bill prohibits rail crews from working in excess of 12 hours. Currently, train crews can operate the train up to 432 hours per month — about twice the time of truck drivers and ship personnel -- the equivalent of 14 hours a day for each of the 30 days of the month. The bill also limits the railroads' use of "limbo time" — the time when the train crew's hours of service have expired but the crew has not arrived at home or their destination. Two

years after the bill's enactment, an employee's limbo time would be limited to 10 hours per month (with the exception of certain unforeseen circumstances, such as an accident or derailment).o Installation of Safety Technologies. The bill mandates implementation of positive train control technologies, such as automatic brake applications which are instrumental to preventing human factor-caused accidents, by December 31, 2014 and authorizes grants to assist railroads in implementing this requirement. The National Transportation Safety Board said that 52 rail accidents they investigated would have been prevented if these new technologies had been in place over the last decade.o H.R. 2095 also strengthens track safety. In 2006, track-related accidents surpassed human factor-related accidents as the leading category of all train accidents. The bill requires railroad carriers to increase inspections and manage the rail in their tracks so as to minimize accidents due to internal rail flaws. o The bill increases enforcement, a key component to strengthening rail safety. A recent audit conducted by the Department of Transportation's Inspector General found that the Federal Government investigates only 13 percent of the most serious grade crossing collisions that occurred, while the Federal Aviation Administration conducted on-site investigations of 93 percent of accidents. The bill would nearly double the Federal safety inspectors (to 800 in 2011) that monitor the railroads' compliance with federally mandated safety standards. "Rail traffic is predicted to more than double in the next twenty years. It is imperative that we take proactive measures now to improve the safety of our nation's railways. As a Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in Congress, I am acutely aware of and uniquely equipped to address the transportation needs of Sacramentans," said Matsui. "Right here in California, and especially in the Capitol Corridor, our demand for safe rail transportation is growing. An investment in our rail security is an investment in our economy," said Matsui.

###